

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice: Diesel Education, Emission Reduction, and Environmental Health Project

An Environmental Justice Grant Success Story

Project Overview

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice provided education, outreach and monitoring on diesel emissions and vehicle idling; reaching out to businesses, truckers, schools bus drivers, parents, students and the San Joaquin Valley Air District to reduce pollution from diesel trucks and buses. Greenaction and many businesses signed “Good Neighbor Agreements” committing the companies to educate their drivers and comply with anti-idling laws.

““While diesel pollution is still a major problem for Kettleman City and Avenal and other valley communities, our project was a positive first step that reduced some diesel pollution that harms health of residents and truckers.”

Bradley Angel, Executive Director of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice.

The Community

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice (Greenaction) is a grassroots organization based in San Francisco and Kettleman City and collaborates with area residents to improve health and reduce pollution in Kettleman City, CA. Kettleman City is a low-income Latino community heavily impacted by harmful diesel emissions and other pollution sources. Diesel emissions can contribute to asthma, cancer, and other health problems, as well as to air pollution and climate change. Diesel trucks emit dangerous and unnecessary levels of pollution when they idle, or when the vehicle is not moving. Idling creates toxic gases (ozone, which causes smog) and soot (containing small particulates called PMs) that are harmful to human health and contribute to the effects of climate change.

Highway 41, which cuts through Kettleman City as it connects the Valley and the Central Coast, often has a steady stream of travelers and truckers alike. On one particular morning, at 9:30 am in one 10-minute stretch of the business district of Kettleman City, a monitor counted 22 trucks and trailers. Interstate 5 with its thousands of trucks every day also runs through Kettleman City.

Project Description

With the support of a \$25,000 Environmental Justice ([EJ Small Grant](#)) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Greenaction for Health and the Environment reduced diesel emissions, improving the air quality of Kettleman City and Avenal, where primarily low-income, Spanish-speaking Latino residents live, work, shop, and go to school. Greenaction created a replicable diesel education and emissions program model, which can be used by other San Joaquin Valley communities impacted by diesel pollution. Greenaction conducted community outreach to educate stakeholders (including community members, businesses, truckers, and trucking companies, schools,

bus drivers and parents) on diesel issues impacting their community, implemented behavior changes (such as complying with anti-idling laws), and encouraged equipment changes that will lead to a reduction of emissions and improve residents respiratory health.

The Results

The Greenaction Team of outreach educators including community members first identified local diesel idling “hot spots” where illegal idling took place. They then educated drivers, businesses and schools about the laws restricting diesel idling and the health risks involved. Finally, they provided information about government grants to assist drivers and businesses in applying for funding to retrofit their old diesel vehicles.

The Greenaction community effort educated 230 truckers, more than 20 businesses, two schools and one daycare center and over 2,000 Kettleman City and Avenal residents. Outreach tools included bilingual fact sheets, house and community meetings and trainings, and door-to-door education.

Nine businesses that use diesel vehicles signed “Good Neighbor Agreements” with Greenaction promising to abide by laws restricting idling of diesel truck engines and pledging to educate their workers about the unhealthy emissions and the law’s restrictions on idling. Businesses that signed the agreement are FedEx Freight and Hla Market in Kettleman City and Avenal Regional Landfill, State Foods Supermarket, T&T Market, State Flos Promos Bakery, Best Mart Liquor, La Nueva Reyna, and Amigos Market in Avenal.



Fed Ex truck in Kettleman City

Greenaction documented reduction of truck idling achieved by comparing idling observed at the beginning of the project to the end. In Avenal, initial monitoring over six hours at diesel hot spots observed 12 out of 12 trucks illegally idling. At the end of the project only two of 15 trucks were observed idling more than five minutes. In Kettleman City, initial monitoring over 16 hours observed 31 trucks, and all were illegally idling. At the end of the project, monitoring observed only two of 23 trucks idling, which is a big improvement.

Reflection

Due to a pending permit expansion for the Waste Management facility, if approved, as many as 400 trucks could travel to and from the facility each day. Some residents are not in favor of the expansion and their diesel campaign efforts from this project are potentially impacted.

The Opening of New Doors

The San Joaquin Valley Air District collaborated with Greenaction and community groups on diesel emissions reduction programs. A replicable and San Joaquin Valley-relevant DEEP model including a bilingual “How to Implement a Diesel Education and Emissions Reduction Program in Your Community” guide with fact sheets was created. Greenaction increased awareness of and compliance with anti-idling laws and achieved a reduction in diesel emissions from reduced idling.



Anti-idling sign.

The successful diesel campaign project can be used as a model for other communities impacted by diesel emission. Community involvement was instrumental in the success of this project. The community identified and monitored the “hot spots,” and spoke with local businesses and truck drivers.

Nine businesses in two towns, including representatives from a large FedEx transfer station signed “good neighbor” agreements committing them to follow idling laws and work with the local community to cut emissions with new technology and educate drivers

What is Up Next for Greenaction

Although the EPA funding for this EJ Small Grant project has concluded, EPA and the California Air Resources Board (ARB) will work with Kettleman City and Avenal to post anti-idling signs in the “hot spots” and at local schools where diesel idling is a concern. The ARB will continue the diesel campaign to educate drivers and local business in close proximity of the posted signs. Once the signs are posted, ARB enforcement unit will also monitor the locations and could issue violations with a penalty of up to \$300.00. Local peace officers can also issue violations.

Other potential projects for the diesel emission issues in the San Joaquin Valley include expanding the campaign to other cities and city ordinances for clean diesel vehicles in high emission zones. Greenaction is also working with residents to stop the proposed expansion of the Kettleman Hills hazardous waste landfill which would cause a massive increase in diesel truck traffic.

GREENACTION PROJECT KEY RESULTS

- The project identified diesel “hot spots” where illegal idling took place.
- Educated over 230 truckers, more than 20 businesses, two schools and one daycare center and over 2,000 Kettleman City and Avenal residents.
- Ninety percent reduction in truck idling achieved by comparing idling observed at the beginning of the project to the end.
- Commercial truck drivers and companies were educated about anti-idling laws and government grant programs that are available to help pay for diesel vehicle retrofits.
- Nine businesses that use diesel vehicles signed “Good Neighbor Agreements” with Greenaction promising to abide by laws restricting idling of diesel truck engines and pledge to educate their workers about unhealthy emissions and the law’s restrictions on idling.

To learn more about GreenAction for Health and the Environment, please visit GreenAction for Health and the Environment, www.greenaction.org or contact Bradley Angel, Executive Director for Green Action for Health and the Environment, at (559) 583.0800, or greenaction@greenaction.org